

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time: Compassionate Shepherding

90th Foundation Anniversary of CCST

Jeremiah 23:1-6; Psalm 23:1-3,3-4,5,6; Ephesians 2:13-18; Mark 6:30-34

Dear family and friends of CCST,

Happy Foundation day anniversary to all!

Today, we officially open the year-long celebration of our parish's foundation anniversary, founded on July 19, 1931. We have so much to be thankful to God and celebrate!

During this 90th year of the Foundation Anniversary of CCST, I want to share Pope Francis's dream for our Church. During his interview conducted by a Jesuit priest, Fr. Antonio Spadaro, he said, "I dream of a church that is a mother and shepherdess. The Church's ministers must be merciful, take responsibility for the people, and accompany them like the Good Samaritan, who washes, cleans, and raises his neighbor.

He dreamt of a Church with a spirit of tender shepherding which focuses on gentle caring and ministering to others through attentive accompaniment. He compares this kind of tenderness to a mother to her children. It is an attitude born out of humility, daily conversion, and one's union with Jesus.

In our day and age of noise and busyness, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the attentive caring for the well-being of others is highly honored. We looked up to the first responders like doctors, nurses, hospital staff, paramedics, and all involved in providing care. We praised and honored them because of what they have done during the unprecedented time. Undeniably, it is what the world needs, not only during crises or unprecedented times. The gentle caring and attentive accompaniment are essential aspects of shepherding, of ministering in the Church. I want to think that the two hands of the logo of the 90th anniversary of CCST represent it, aside from a symbol of working people of the parish.

Today, our readings provide us the wisdom of compassionate shepherding and warning of those who misled others.

We heard the Word of God through the prophet Jeremiah. We learned that God is angry at the shepherds who misled rather than guide, scattered rather than gathering the flock, and harm rather than care. This kind of shepherds will face the consequence of their misdeeds. Like the first reading last Sunday, Prophet Amos criticized the shepherds of Israel, particularly the leaders of the temple of Bethel. The priests and leaders of the temple were appointed and employed by the King, but not prophet Amos. He was just an ordinary farmer with no credentials nor lineage of leadership. Discernibly, when a leader is after only his position and interest, his service becomes superficial or a show. Both prophets Jeremiah and Amos, who belonged to a different era of the history of Israel, dealt with the recurring back problem of self-serving or arrogant shepherds. While they proclaimed God's promise for a leader who can show tenderness to the poor, they issued a strong warning to bad shepherds of the consequences of their evil deeds. God always hears the cry of the poor. He will send a shepherd, a king, and son of David, to gather the lost sheep and appoint new shepherds (cf Ez 34:23).

This promise finds its fulfillment in the life of our Lord Jesus and those with whom he entrusted the Church. St. Paul proclaims in our second reading the genuine Good Shepherd - the one who tenderly leads people to God, who attentively accompanies his sheep, who cares to bring reconciliation, who sacrifices himself, and whose blood gives birth to new People of God. The responsorial psalm echoes this faith in Jesus, "the Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I shall want" (Ps. 23:1). It is the good news that we hear from the Gospel of Mark. The tender heart of the Good Shepherd is shown in his attentiveness to human needs. He wanted his disciples to rest awhile from their missionary labors. It's good to learn the report of their works, but he is more concerned about their well-being. This is our Good Shepherd! He was moved with compassion to see the crowd like sheep without a shepherd - a sheep without a shepherd cannot find its way, cannot find its pasture, cannot find

its safety - for them, although he may be tired, he provided time to teach them many things (cf 6:34). He reveals to us one of the essential aspects of shepherding: to teach.

In the Holy Mass we celebrate each Sunday, Jesus continues to teach us through his Word. That is, whenever the Word of God is proclaimed in the liturgy, Jesus speaks to us. We are a people being formed by his Word, for His Word proclaimed to us is meant to reprove, rebuke, exhort, and enlighten us (cf. Tim 4:2). It prepares us to encounter the incredible gift of God, the Holy Eucharist, the presence of Jesus par excellence! If we genuinely open our hearts to him, we'll be formed and become whom we encountered.

However, there are times we fail to listen. Let us recall when; when was the time that we fail to listen to our Good Shepherd? How do we know that we fail to listen? We fail to listen to Jesus when we are too ready to give advice instead of listening and understanding. We fail to listen when we teach others without a personal witness. We fail to listen when we are ready to discipline without genuine care. We fail to listen when telling lies becomes a habit than being honest. We fail to listen when we spread gossip and rumors, forwarding unsubstantiated opinions than standing for the truth. We fail to listen when we became complacent in protecting the dignity of human life. We fail to listen when we ignore the plight of the poor and vulnerable in our midst.

When we listened to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we commit to being co-responsible to one another, for we are shepherds to one another, in different ways, as parents, teachers, brothers, sisters, members of the church ministry, or simply as Christians, each in his/her sphere of life and with his/her own contribution. When we shepherd others, we are to teach. It involves telling the truth and unmasking sins, rebuking and exhorting, enlightening, and leading the person to God. But we do it with compassion, for the love of Jesus, like our parish patron St. Therese.

Let us beg Jesus, our Good Shepherd, to heal us and grace us an attitude proper of who we are: children of God, the image of God, heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven, Holy People of God, Mystical Body of Christ. Let us, for a moment, make this our prayer:

Forgive me, Lord, when I teach others and practice contrary to what I say.
Forgive me, Lord, when at times I discipline others to satisfy my anger.
Forgive me, Lord, when I rush to judge others without knowing the whole story first.
Forgive me, Lord, when I don't tell the truth for the sake of friendship and family.
Forgive me, Lord, when I allow self-interest to influence my ministry.
Forgive me, Lord, when I lead others the wrong way.

Give me the grace to better myself in teaching, leading, guiding, caring, loving others. Amen.

Happy foundation day anniversary, shepherds of the Good Shepherd!

God bless you.

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor